

Exhibit 15

## PRE-DECISIONAL/DELIBERATIVE

U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services  
Office of the Director  
Camp Springs, MD 20588-0009



U.S. Citizenship  
and Immigration  
Services

January 9, 2025

## RECOMMENDATION

## MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY

FROM: Ur M. Jaddou      UR M  
Director      JADDOU      Digitally signed by UR M  
JADDOU  
Date: 2025.01.09  
23:43:38 -05'00'

SUBJECT:      **Extension of the Venezuela 2023 Temporary Protected Status  
Designation and Consolidation of Filing Processes**

**Purpose:** Venezuela has two existing designations for Temporary Protected Status (TPS). One of Venezuela's designations for TPS will expire April 2, 2025; the other will expire September 10, 2025. At least 60 days before a TPS designation expires, the Secretary, after consultation with appropriate U.S. Government agencies, is required to review the conditions in a country designated for TPS to determine whether the conditions supporting the designation continue to be met, and, if so, the length of an extension of the designation.<sup>1</sup> Accordingly, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) has completed a review of the conditions in Venezuela to inform the consideration of whether to extend Venezuela for TPS.

As a result of this review, USCIS recommends that you extend Venezuela's most recent designation for TPS for 18 months, from April 3, 2025, through October 2, 2026, due to extraordinary and temporary conditions that prevent Venezuelan nationals<sup>2</sup> from returning in safety to Venezuela. USCIS has determined that it is not contrary to the national interest of the United States to permit Venezuelan nationals eligible for TPS to remain in the United States temporarily.

As part of the review process, USCIS has consulted with the Department of State (DOS). Like the USCIS recommendation, DOS provided an assessment indicating that extraordinary and temporary conditions in Venezuela prevent Venezuelan nationals from returning in safety and that the TPS designations should be extended. While the DOS also recommended redesignation, you are required by statute to decide whether to extend or terminate an existing TPS designation at least 60 days

<sup>1</sup> See Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) sec. 244(b)(3)(A). See also Attachment A: Temporary Protected Status Legal Authority.

<sup>2</sup> In addition to nationals of Venezuela, individuals having no nationality who last habitually resided in Venezuela may also be eligible for TPS under Venezuela's designation. See INA sec. 244(a)(1). As such, references to nationals of Venezuela in this memorandum include individuals having no nationality who last habitually resided in Venezuela.

PRE-DECISIONAL/DELIBERATIVE



## PRE-DECISIONAL/DELIBERATIVE

**Extension of the Venezuela 2023 Temporary Protected Status Designation and Consolidation of Filing Processes**

Page 2

before the expiration of the current designation, or the designation is automatically extended for a minimum of six months.

USCIS has also evaluated the operational feasibility and resulting impact on stakeholders with having two separate filing processes for the TPS designations. Operational challenges in the identification and adjudication of Venezuela TPS filings and confusion among stakeholders exist because of the two separate TPS designations. To date, USCIS has implemented operational measures to process Venezuela TPS cases for both designations; however, it can most efficiently process these cases by consolidating the re-registration filing processes for the two Venezuela TPS populations. USCIS recommends both existing designations for Venezuela be under one streamlined filing process, which would not change any eligibility requirements. As discussed below, the Venezuela 2021 TPS designation and the Venezuela 2023 TPS designation are based upon the same factual circumstances and legal considerations pursuant to INA § 244, and any individual eligible for TPS under the Venezuela 2021 TPS designation would also be eligible under the Venezuela 2023 TPS designation. For that reason, publication of the Federal Register Notice of the Venezuela 2023 TPS designation extension will allow individuals registered under either the Venezuela 2021 or Venezuela 2023 designation to re-register under the extension. This would not, however, require a beneficiary registered under the Venezuela 2021 TPS designation to re-register at this time. Rather, it would provide Venezuela 2021 TPS beneficiaries with the option of doing so.

**TPS Overview:** Venezuela was initially designated for TPS on March 9, 2021 (the “Venezuela 2021” TPS designation), on the basis of extraordinary and temporary conditions that prevented nationals of Venezuela from returning in safety.<sup>3</sup> On September 8, 2022, DHS extended the Venezuela 2021 TPS designation for 18 months.<sup>4</sup> On October 3, 2023, DHS extended the Venezuela 2021 TPS designation for another 18 months with an expiration date of September 10, 2025, and separately redesignated Venezuela for 18 months<sup>5</sup> (the “Venezuela 2023” TPS designation) with an expiration date of April 2, 2025, resulting in two separate and concurrent Venezuela TPS designations.

To be eligible for TPS under the Venezuela 2023 TPS designation, along with meeting the other eligibility requirements, individuals must have continuously resided in the United States since July 31, 2023, and have been continuously physically present in the United States since October 3, 2023. Because Venezuela 2021 TPS beneficiaries were required to have continuously resided in the United States since March 8, 2021, and to have been continuously physically present in the United States since March 9, 2021, such individuals therefore also meet those requirements from the Venezuela 2023 TPS designation. There are currently approximately 607,000<sup>6</sup> beneficiaries and approximately 60,000<sup>7</sup> pending initial applications under Venezuela’s TPS designations.

<sup>3</sup> See *Designation of Venezuela for Temporary Protected Status and Implementation of Employment Authorization for Venezuelans Covered by Deferred Enforced Departure*, 86 Fed. Reg. 13574 (Mar. 9, 2021).

<sup>4</sup> See *Extension of the Designation of Venezuela for Temporary Protected Status*, 87 Fed. Reg. 55024 (Sept. 8, 2022).

<sup>5</sup> See *Extension and Redesignation of Venezuela for Temporary Protected Status*, 88 Fed. Reg. 68130 (Oct. 3, 2023).

<sup>6</sup> Estimate as of January 8, 2025.

<sup>7</sup> Estimate as of January 8, 2025.

PRE-DECISIONAL/DELIBERATIVE



## PRE-DECISIONAL/DELIBERATIVE

**Extension of the Venezuela 2023 Temporary Protected Status Designation and Consolidation of Filing Processes**

Page 3

**Assessment of Country Conditions:** USCIS and DOS each conducted a thorough review of conditions in Venezuela. The full USCIS and DOS reports, upon which this recommendation is based, can be found in Attachments B and C, respectively. These reports show that extraordinary and temporary conditions continue to prevent Venezuelan nationals from returning in safety. Venezuela was initially designated for TPS due to a severe humanitarian emergency marked by an economic contraction, deepening poverty, reduced access to food and medicine, a collapse in basic services, fuel shortages, human rights abuses and political repression, crime and violence, and increased human mobility and displacement. These conditions persist with continuing complex political, humanitarian, and economic crises, as well as criminal activities of non-state armed groups, repression, and crumbling infrastructure. A detailed discussion of these country conditions follows.

Venezuela is experiencing “a complex, serious and multidimensional humanitarian crisis.”<sup>8</sup> The crisis has reportedly disrupted every aspect of life in Venezuela. “Basic services like electricity, internet access, and water are patchy; malnutrition is on the rise; the healthcare system has collapsed; and children receive poor or no education. Inflation rates are also among the highest in the world.”<sup>9</sup> Venezuela’s “complex crisis” has pushed Venezuelans into “poverty, hunger, poor health, crime, desperation and migration.”<sup>10</sup> Moreover, Nicolás Maduro’s declaration of victory in the July 28, 2024 presidential election—which has been contested as fraudulent by the opposition—“has been followed by yet another sweeping crackdown on dissent.”<sup>11</sup>

**Food Insecurity**

Food insecurity is also a significant challenge in Venezuela.<sup>12</sup> “Despite a recent economic recovery [...], many families are going hungry and depending on aid to feed themselves.”<sup>13</sup> Reports indicate

<sup>8</sup> Annual Report 2023 - Chapter IV.B - Venezuela, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), Apr. 25, 2024, pg. 730, available at: [https://www.oas.org/en/iachr/docs/annual/2023/chapters/IA2023\\_Cap\\_4B\\_Venezuela\\_ENG.PDF](https://www.oas.org/en/iachr/docs/annual/2023/chapters/IA2023_Cap_4B_Venezuela_ENG.PDF) (last visited Aug. 20, 2024).

<sup>9</sup> Iván Reyes, As election looms, Venezuelans see-saw between hope and fear, *The New Humanitarian*, Jul. 8, 2024, available at: <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/photo-feature/2024/07/08/election-looms-venezuela-see-saw-between-hope-and-fear> (last visited Aug. 20, 2024).

<sup>10</sup> Regina García Cano, As Maduro shifts from migration denier to defender, Venezuelans consider leaving if he is reelected, *The Associated Press*, updated May 29, 2024, available at: <https://apnews.com/article/venezuela-election-migrants-maduro-9ba01c2cd7246adb9369bf69941d986a> (last visited Aug. 20, 2024).

<sup>11</sup> Sergio Martínez-Beltrán and Marian Carrasquero, Venezuelans in US anxiously watch home crisis, brace for new migration surge, *Morning Edition*, National Public Radio (NPR), Aug. 12, 2024, available at: <https://www.npr.org/2024/08/11/nx-sl-5066867/venezuela-maduro-election-migration-usborder-immigration> (last visited Aug. 12, 2024).

<sup>12</sup> Clare Ribando Seelke, Venezuela: Political Crisis and U.S. Policy, Congressional Research Service (CRS), updated Sep. 1, 2023, pg. 1, available at: <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IF/IF10230> (last visited Aug. 22, 2024).

<sup>13</sup> Mariela Nava, In Venezuela, hunger stalks presidential election, *Reuters*, Jul. 9, 2024, available at: <https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/venezuela-hunger-stalks-presidential-election-2024-07-09/> (last visited Aug. 22, 2024).

PRE-DECISIONAL/DELIBERATIVE



## PRE-DECISIONAL/DELIBERATIVE

**Extension of the Venezuela 2023 Temporary Protected Status Designation and Consolidation of Filing Processes**

Page 4

that Venezuela “suffers the second-highest level of hunger in South America,” with “[s]ome 5.1 million people [...] not getting enough to eat.”<sup>14</sup> The U.N. Special Rapporteur on the right to food reported that “[f]ood insecurity, malnutrition and deterioration in livelihoods is cited as the primary cause for the mass migration out of the country.”<sup>15</sup>

Notably, the problem of food shortages and scarcity has abated;<sup>16</sup> however, “supply issues have been replaced by affordability ones.”<sup>17</sup> In 2023, “86% of the population reported not having enough money to buy the food needed in their household,” while around 22% “went permanently hungry at times during the year.”<sup>18</sup> Additionally, “chronic malnutrition is surging among children, leading to stunting, wasting, delayed cognitive development, and higher risks of illness more generally.”<sup>19</sup>

**Access to Basic Services (Including Electricity, Water, & Fuel)**

<sup>14</sup> Mariela Nava, In Venezuela, hunger stalks presidential election, Reuters, Jul. 9, 2024, available at: <https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/venezuela-hunger-stalks-presidential-election-2024-07-09/> (last visited Aug. 22, 2024).

<sup>15</sup> End of Mission Statement; UN Special Rapporteur on the right to food by Mr. Michael Fakhri; Visit to Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), 1-14 February 2024, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), Feb. 14, 2024, pg. 3, available at: <https://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2104669/20240214-com-statement-venezuela-sr-food-en.pdf> (last visited Aug. 22, 2024).

<sup>16</sup> Regina García Cano, Venezuelans turn to odd jobs and gambling to stretch meager wages they hope will grow after election, The Associated Press, updated July 24, 2024, available at: <https://apnews.com/article/venezuela-presidential-election-maduro-crisis-machado-edmundo-4c7f83a5a44a6d80f12d8cad8b67b026> (last visited Aug. 20, 2024); Gabriela Mesones Rojo and Iván Reyes, Hunger, healthcare, and schools: Reasons to leave Venezuela (along with a Maduro poll win), The New Humanitarian, Jun. 25, 2024, available at: <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/analysis/2024/06/25/hunger-healthcare-schools-reasons-leave-venezuela-maduro-poll-win> (last visited Aug. 22, 2024); Follow-Up Report on the Complex Humanitarian Emergency in Venezuela, HumVenezuela, Nov. 2023, pg. 27, available at: <https://humvenezuela.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/FOLLOW-UP-REPORT-ON-THE-COMPLEX-HUMANITARIAN-EMERGENCY-IN-VENEZUELA-2023-2.pdf> (last visited Aug. 22, 2024).

<sup>17</sup> Regina García Cano, UN-backed food expert calls on Venezuela to tackle hunger and urges end to economic sanctions, The Associated Press, Feb. 14, 2024, available at: <https://apnews.com/article/venezuela-food-insecurity-hunger-malnutrition-un-maduro-afb4af4978c09cf0f3e54e1cfe981b5> (last visited Aug. 22, 2024).

<sup>18</sup> Gabriela Mesones Rojo and Iván Reyes, Hunger, healthcare, and schools: Reasons to leave Venezuela (along with a Maduro poll win), The New Humanitarian, Jun. 25, 2024, available at: <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/analysis/2024/06/25/hunger-healthcare-schools-reasons-leave-venezuela-maduro-poll-win> (last visited Aug. 22, 2024).

<sup>19</sup> Gabriela Mesones Rojo and Iván Reyes, Hunger, healthcare, and schools: Reasons to leave Venezuela (along with a Maduro poll win), The New Humanitarian, Jun. 25, 2024, available at: <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/analysis/2024/06/25/hunger-healthcare-schools-reasons-leave-venezuela-maduro-poll-win> (last visited Aug. 22, 2024).

PRE-DECISIONAL/DELIBERATIVE



## PRE-DECISIONAL/DELIBERATIVE

**Extension of the Venezuela 2023 Temporary Protected Status Designation and Consolidation of Filing Processes**

Page 5

The lack of access to basic services including electricity, water, and fuel represents another component of Venezuela's crisis.<sup>20</sup> Venezuela "experiences regular power outages,"<sup>21</sup> and "interruptions in electrical service" are common and reportedly occur daily.<sup>22</sup> The population suffering intermittent and prolonged power failures increased from 25.9% to 61.9% between 2022 and 2023.<sup>23</sup> Additionally, Venezuelans face "growing challenges to access water and sanitation since the water supply is not continuous, and the quality of water has deteriorated."<sup>24</sup> "Potable water is frequently not available for long periods,"<sup>25</sup> and many households lack reliable access to potable water.<sup>26</sup>

Venezuela is also impacted by fuel shortages.<sup>27</sup> Venezuela experienced "years of painful fuel shortages that kept drivers in line for sometimes days to fill up their cars and severely restricted Venezuela's industrial and agricultural activity."<sup>28</sup> Natural gas — "the fuel essential for cooking, generating power and feeding petrochemical plants and factories" — has also been frequently scarce.<sup>29</sup> In 2023, 69.4% of households were impacted by failures in the availability of domestic gas

<sup>20</sup> Florantonia Singer, Caracas: The ordeal of living in a city with failed public services, *El País* (Spa.), Sep. 24, 2023, available at: <https://english.elpais.com/international/2023-09-24/caracas-the-ordeal-of-living-in-a-city-with-failed-public-services.html> (last visited Aug. 23, 2024).

<sup>21</sup> Venezuela Country Security Report, Overseas Security Advisory Council (OSAC), U.S. Dep't of State, last updated Mar. 26, 2024, available at: <https://www.osac.gov/Content/Report/34f99e62-2161-412d-bfeb-1e752539f6bf> (last visited Aug. 23, 2024).

<sup>22</sup> Clare Ribando Seelke, Venezuela: Political Crisis and U.S. Policy, Congressional Research Service (CRS), updated Sep. 1, 2023, pg. 1, available at: <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IF/IF10230> (last visited Aug. 23, 2024); Gabriela Mesones Rojo and Iván Reyes, Hunger, healthcare, and schools: Reasons to leave Venezuela (along with a Maduro poll win), *The New Humanitarian*, Jun. 25, 2024, available at: <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/analysis/2024/06/25/hunger-healthcare-schools-reasons-leave-venezuela-maduro-poll-win> (last visited Aug. 23, 2024).

<sup>23</sup> Follow-Up Report on the Complex Humanitarian Emergency in Venezuela, *HumVenezuela*, Nov. 2023, pg. 21, available at: <https://humvenezuela.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/FOLLOW-UP-REPORT-ON-THE-COMPLEX-HUMANITARIAN-EMERGENCY-IN-VENEZUELA-2023-2.pdf> (last visited Aug. 23, 2024).

<sup>24</sup> Annual Report 2023 - Chapter IV.B - Venezuela, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), Apr. 25, 2024, pg. 732, available at: [https://www.oas.org/en/iachr/docs/annual/2023/chapters/IA2023\\_Cap\\_4B\\_Venezuela\\_ENG.PDF](https://www.oas.org/en/iachr/docs/annual/2023/chapters/IA2023_Cap_4B_Venezuela_ENG.PDF) (last visited Aug. 26, 2024).

<sup>25</sup> Venezuela Country Security Report, Overseas Security Advisory Council (OSAC), U.S. Dep't of State, last updated Mar. 26, 2024, available at: <https://www.osac.gov/Content/Report/34f99e62-2161-412d-bfeb-1e752539f6bf> (last visited Aug. 26, 2024).

<sup>26</sup> Clare Ribando Seelke, Venezuela: Political Crisis and U.S. Policy, Congressional Research Service (CRS), updated Sep. 1, 2023, pg. 1, available at: <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IF/IF10230> (last visited Aug. 26, 2024).

<sup>27</sup> Luke Taylor, 'To be reunited ... would be a dream': Venezuelan exiles' fate hangs on vote, *The Guardian*, Jul. 25, 2024, available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/article/2024/jul/25/venezuelan-exiles-election-maduro> (last visited Aug. 27, 2024).

<sup>28</sup> Fabiola Zepa and Lucia Kassai, Oil Majors Fill Venezuela Gas Pumps, Easing Years of Shortages, *Bloomberg*, Feb. 9, 2024, available at: [https://www.rigzone.com/news/wire/oil\\_majors\\_fill\\_venezuela\\_gas\\_pumps\\_easing\\_years\\_of\\_shortages-09-feb-2024-175693-article/](https://www.rigzone.com/news/wire/oil_majors_fill_venezuela_gas_pumps_easing_years_of_shortages-09-feb-2024-175693-article/) (last visited Sep. 6, 2024).

<sup>29</sup> Marianna Parraga, Deisy Buitrago, and Mircely Guanipa, Whoever wins election, Venezuela faces natural gas problem, *Reuters*, Jul. 24, 2024, available at: <https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/gas-rich-venezuela-next-president-faces-problem-producing-it-2024-07-24/> (last visited Aug. 26, 2024).

PRE-DECISIONAL/DELIBERATIVE



## PRE-DECISIONAL/DELIBERATIVE

**Extension of the Venezuela 2023 Temporary Protected Status Designation and Consolidation of Filing Processes**

Page 6

service.<sup>30</sup> Furthermore, most Venezuelans without direct gas in their homes for cooking instead “rely on domestic gas services that households pay for by filling gas cylinders at state plants, one per family per month.”<sup>31</sup> However, “[t]he capacity of each cylinder averages about 25 days and cannot always be replenished regularly.”<sup>32</sup>

**Health Crisis**

The collapse of Venezuela’s healthcare system is one of the most severe aspects of its humanitarian crisis.<sup>33</sup> Venezuela’s health system is marked by deteriorated infrastructure, lack of medical equipment, poor maintenance, lack of public services, deficiencies in the provision of medicines and medical supplies, and power and water cuts, in addition to corruption in the health sector, and underfunded and understaffed health centers.<sup>34</sup> Consequently, health indicators in Venezuela have worsened since the collapse of the Venezuelan health system in 2016.<sup>35</sup>

Venezuela’s public health system has reportedly lost an estimated “70 percent of its capacity since 2016,” and “millions of individuals are unable to access adequate health care” in Venezuela.<sup>36</sup> Additionally, Venezuela faces “persistent shortages and deficiencies in the supply of medicines, supplies, equipment and medical treatments.”<sup>37</sup>

The collapsed health care system has led to the re-emergence of “[s]everal vaccine-preventable

<sup>30</sup> Follow-Up Report on the Complex Humanitarian Emergency in Venezuela, HumVenezuela, Nov. 2023, pg. 22, available at: <https://humvenezuela.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/FOLLOW-UP-REPORT-ON-THE-COMPLEX-HUMANITARIAN-EMERGENCY-IN-VENEZUELA-2023-2.pdf> (last visited Aug. 26, 2024).

<sup>31</sup> Follow-Up Report on the Complex Humanitarian Emergency in Venezuela, HumVenezuela, Nov. 2023, pg. 22, available at: <https://humvenezuela.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/FOLLOW-UP-REPORT-ON-THE-COMPLEX-HUMANITARIAN-EMERGENCY-IN-VENEZUELA-2023-2.pdf> (last visited Aug. 26, 2024).

<sup>32</sup> Follow-Up Report on the Complex Humanitarian Emergency in Venezuela, HumVenezuela, Nov. 2023, pg. 22, available at: <https://humvenezuela.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/FOLLOW-UP-REPORT-ON-THE-COMPLEX-HUMANITARIAN-EMERGENCY-IN-VENEZUELA-2023-2.pdf> (last visited Aug. 26, 2024).

<sup>33</sup> Gabriela Mesones Rojo and Iván Reyes, Hunger, healthcare, and schools: Reasons to leave Venezuela (along with a Maduro poll win), The New Humanitarian, Jun. 25, 2024, available at: <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/analysis/2024/06/25/hunger-healthcare-schools-reasons-leave-venezuela-maduro-poll-win> (last visited Aug. 21, 2024).

<sup>34</sup> Venezuela - Country Focus, European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA), Nov. 2023, pg. 33, available at: [https://coi.euaa.europa.eu/administration/easo/PLib/2023\\_11\\_EUAA\\_COI\\_Report\\_Venezuela\\_Country\\_Focus.pdf](https://coi.euaa.europa.eu/administration/easo/PLib/2023_11_EUAA_COI_Report_Venezuela_Country_Focus.pdf) (last visited Aug. 21, 2024).

<sup>35</sup> International Protection Needs of Venezuelan Nationals, Amnesty International, Oct. 2023, pg. 5, available at: <https://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2099475/AMR5373312023ENGLISH.pdf> (last visited Aug. 21, 2024).

<sup>36</sup> Annual Report 2023 - Chapter IV.B - Venezuela, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), Apr. 25, 2024, pg. 731, available at: [https://www.oas.org/en/iachr/docs/annual/2023/chapters/IA2023\\_Cap\\_4B\\_Venezuela\\_ENG.PDF](https://www.oas.org/en/iachr/docs/annual/2023/chapters/IA2023_Cap_4B_Venezuela_ENG.PDF) (last visited Aug. 21, 2024).

<sup>37</sup> Annual Report 2023 - Chapter IV.B - Venezuela, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), Apr. 25, 2024, pg. 731, available at: [https://www.oas.org/en/iachr/docs/annual/2023/chapters/IA2023\\_Cap\\_4B\\_Venezuela\\_ENG.PDF](https://www.oas.org/en/iachr/docs/annual/2023/chapters/IA2023_Cap_4B_Venezuela_ENG.PDF) (last visited Aug. 21, 2024).

PRE-DECISIONAL/DELIBERATIVE



## PRE-DECISIONAL/DELIBERATIVE

**Extension of the Venezuela 2023 Temporary Protected Status Designation and Consolidation of Filing Processes**

Page 7

diseases,”<sup>38</sup> and “[p]reviously eradicated diseases such as diphtheria and measles [...] have become a major concern.”<sup>39</sup> “Mosquito control measures have deteriorated, and malaria cases have returned to areas that had not had cases for many years.”<sup>40</sup>

**Education**

Reports indicate that “dilapidated infrastructure, the lack of teachers and of public transportation – combined with the shortcomings of the school meals programme – are driving many students away. The impoverishment of families due to high inflation is also forcing children to drop out of school to work. In 2023, 40% of students between the ages of three and 17 attended school irregularly.”<sup>41</sup>

**Economic Crisis**

Venezuela “has faced a long-running economic crisis,”<sup>42</sup> with its economy suffering from “a prolonged meltdown marked by triple-digit inflation and a mass exodus of millions of migrants seeking better prospects elsewhere.”<sup>43</sup> Reporting in July 2024 indicated that over the last 10 years, gross domestic product in Venezuela has declined by about 73%.<sup>44</sup> Though Venezuela experienced some economic improvement in 2024,<sup>45</sup> it is “insufficient for an economy like Venezuela’s, urgently in need of double-digit growth for several years in order to return to what it once was.”<sup>46</sup>

<sup>38</sup> Jenny Garcia, Stephane Helleringer, Gerardo Correac, and Maria Di Brienzac, Updated estimates of infant mortality in Venezuela, *The Lancet Global Health*, Volume 12, Issue 1, e25 - e27, Jan. 2024, available at:

[https://www.thelancet.com/journals/langlo/article/PIIS2214-109X\(23\)00520-X/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/langlo/article/PIIS2214-109X(23)00520-X/fulltext) (last visited Sep. 13, 2024).

<sup>39</sup> Clare Ribando Seelke, Venezuela: Political Crisis and U.S. Policy, Congressional Research Service (CRS), updated Sep. 1, 2023, pg. 1, available at: <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IF/IF10230> (last visited Aug. 21, 2024).

<sup>40</sup> Venezuela Country Security Report, Overseas Security Advisory Council (OSAC), U.S. Department of State, last updated Mar. 26, 2024, available at: <https://www.osac.gov/Content/Report/34f99e62-2161-412d-bfeb-1e752539f6bf> (last visited Aug. 21, 2024).

<sup>41</sup> Gabriela Mesones Rojo and Iván Reyes, Hunger, healthcare, and schools: Reasons to leave Venezuela (along with a Maduro poll win), *The New Humanitarian*, Jun. 25, 2024, available at: <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/analysis/2024/06/25/hunger-healthcare-schools-reasons-leave-venezuela-maduro-poll-win> (last visited Sep. 3, 2024).

<sup>42</sup> Mayela Armas, Venezuela’s government doubles down on inflation control ahead of election, *Reuters*, Feb. 28, 2024, available at: <https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/venezuelas-government-doubles-down-inflation-control-ahead-election-2024-02-28/> (last visited Aug. 20, 2024).

<sup>43</sup> Mayela Armas, Venezuela economy grew 5% in 2023, will reach 8% this year-Maduro, *Reuters*, Jan. 15, 2024, available at: <https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/venezuela-economy-grew-5-2023-will-reach-8-this-year-maduro-2024-01-15/> (last visited Aug. 20, 2024).

<sup>44</sup> Mariela Nava, In Venezuela, hunger stalks presidential election, *Reuters*, Jul. 9, 2024, available at: <https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/venezuela-hunger-stalks-presidential-election-2024-07-09/> (last visited Aug. 20, 2024).

<sup>45</sup> Alonso Moleiro, Venezuela experiences an economic recovery in times of electoral uncertainty, *El País* (Spa.), Jul. 22, 2024, available at: <https://english.elpais.com/economy-and-business/2024-07-22/venezuela-experiences-an-economic-recovery-in-times-of-electoral-uncertainty.html> (last visited Aug. 20, 2024).

<sup>46</sup> Alonso Moleiro, Venezuela experiences an economic recovery in times of electoral uncertainty, *El País* (Spa.), Jul. 22, 2024, available at: <https://english.elpais.com/economy-and-business/2024-07-22/venezuela-experiences-an-economic-recovery-in-times-of-electoral-uncertainty.html> (last visited Aug. 20, 2024).

PRE-DECISIONAL/DELIBERATIVE



## PRE-DECISIONAL/DELIBERATIVE

**Extension of the Venezuela 2023 Temporary Protected Status Designation and Consolidation of Filing Processes**

Page 8

**Political Repression & Human Rights**

According to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), Maduro and his representatives have “systematically violated human rights, including freedom of expression, to facilitate the concentration of power in the executive branch, to discourage political participation and to undermine the independence of institutions.”<sup>47</sup> Conditions have grown worse due to harsher crackdowns by Maduro and his representatives on the opposition and their use of thoroughly flawed elections to seize full control of state institutions. Maduro and his representatives have closed off virtually all channels for political dissent, restricting civil liberties and prosecuting perceived opponents without regard for due process.”<sup>48</sup> Furthermore, the IACHR has reported allegations that “serious human rights violations” have been committed in Venezuela, which, it asserts, “may amount to crimes against humanity.”<sup>49</sup> In late June 2023, International Criminal Court judges “authorized the resumption of an investigation into alleged crimes against humanity in Venezuela.”<sup>50</sup> Human Rights Watch reported that, in September 2023, “the United Nations Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) found serious human rights violations that continued the same patterns of conduct that the FFM had previously qualified as crimes against humanity.”<sup>51</sup>

Reports indicate that leading up to the recent Venezuelan presidential election, the electoral process was marred by human rights abuses and irregularities that kept the playing field uneven, with reports of Maduro and his representatives repeatedly committing “systematic human rights violations against critics and opposition leaders.”<sup>52</sup> According to Amnesty International, the election period was marked with escalating repression with “incessant attacks on civic space, tens of arbitrary detentions, enforced disappearances, torture, reprisals against businesses and contractors providing services to opposition figures, and arbitrary and abusive administrative measures.”<sup>53</sup>

<sup>47</sup> Annual Report 2023 - Chapter IV.B - Venezuela, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), Apr. 25, 2024, pg. 720, available at: [https://www.oas.org/en/iachr/docs/annual/2023/chapters/IA2023\\_Cap\\_4B\\_Venezuela\\_ENG.PDF](https://www.oas.org/en/iachr/docs/annual/2023/chapters/IA2023_Cap_4B_Venezuela_ENG.PDF) (last visited Aug. 30, 2024).

<sup>48</sup> Freedom in the World 2024 – Venezuela, Freedom House, Feb. 29, 2024, available at: <https://freedomhouse.org/country/venezuela/freedom-world/2024> (last visited Aug. 29, 2024).

<sup>49</sup> Annual Report 2023 - Chapter IV.B - Venezuela, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), Apr. 25, 2024, pg. 720, available at: [https://www.oas.org/en/iachr/docs/annual/2023/chapters/IA2023\\_Cap\\_4B\\_Venezuela\\_ENG.PDF](https://www.oas.org/en/iachr/docs/annual/2023/chapters/IA2023_Cap_4B_Venezuela_ENG.PDF) (last visited Aug. 30, 2024); International Protection Needs of Venezuelan Nationals, Amnesty International, Oct. 2023, pg. 3, available at: <https://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2099475/AMR5373312023ENGLISH.pdf> (last visited Aug. 30, 2024).

<sup>50</sup> World Report 2024 - Venezuela, Human Rights Watch, Jan. 11, 2024, available at: <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2024/country-chapters/venezuela> (last visited Aug. 30, 2024).

<sup>51</sup> World Report 2024 - Venezuela, Human Rights Watch, Jan. 11, 2024, available at: <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2024/country-chapters/venezuela> (last visited Aug. 30, 2024).

<sup>52</sup> Venezuela: Repression Mars Key Upcoming Election, Human Rights Watch, Jul. 25, 2024, available at: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/07/25/venezuela-repression-mars-key-upcoming-election> (last visited Sep. 3, 2024).

<sup>53</sup> Venezuela: After an electoral period marked by repression, a commitment to human rights is imperative, Amnesty International, Jul. 25, 2024, available at: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2024/07/venezuela-after-electoral-period-marked-repression-commitment-human-rights-imperative/> (last visited Sep. 3, 2024).

PRE-DECISIONAL/DELIBERATIVE



## PRE-DECISIONAL/DELIBERATIVE

**Extension of the Venezuela 2023 Temporary Protected Status Designation and Consolidation of Filing Processes**

Page 9

On July 31, 2024, the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela reported that, since the National Electoral Council's declaration that Maduro had won the presidential election in the early morning hours of July 29, "thousands of people—including men, women, children, and the elderly—have taken to the streets across the country to protest the results."<sup>54</sup> In the aftermath of the election, Maduro and his representatives "mounted a furious campaign against anyone challenging the declared results of the vote, unleashing a wave of repression that human rights groups say is unlike anything the country has seen in recent decades."<sup>55</sup>

**Crime & Insecurity**

Venezuela was once considered the most dangerous country in Latin America.<sup>56</sup> However, "a discernible reduction in the overall levels of violence could be observed" in 2023 and 2024.<sup>57</sup> Various factors behind the apparent decline in crime include the country's "ongoing economic crisis," which has reportedly reduced "opportunities for extortion and ransom kidnappings," and led Venezuelan criminal groups to "infiltrate Venezuelan diasporas settled in other Latin American countries."<sup>58</sup> The "monopolization of violence in some regions" by "non-state armed groups," as well as pacts between Maduro representatives and some criminal groups, have also reportedly contributed to improved perceptions of security in certain areas.<sup>59</sup>

Nevertheless, Venezuelans continue to "face physical insecurity and violence from several sources, including irregular armed groups, security forces, and organized gangs."<sup>60</sup> The European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA) reported that "Criminal armed groups often operate with the cooperation, or tolerance of state security forces" in Venezuela.<sup>61</sup> Moreover, security forces in Venezuela have been "accused of committing human rights abuses such as torture and cruel,

<sup>54</sup> Venezuela: UN Fact-Finding Mission expresses alarm over human rights violations in post-election context, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), Jul. 31, 2024, available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/07/venezuela-un-fact-finding-mission-expresses-alarm-over-human-rights> (last visited Sep. 3, 2024).

<sup>55</sup> Frances Robles, 'Operation Knock-Knock': Venezuela Sweeps Up Dissenters After Disputed Vote, The New York Times, Aug. 10, 2024, available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/08/10/world/americas/venezuela-election-maduro.html> (last visited Sep. 3, 2024).

<sup>56</sup> Venezuela Investigative Unit, Why Is Venezuela's Crime Rate Falling?, InSight Crime, May 28, 2024, available at: <https://insightcrime.org/news/venezuela-crime-rate-falling/> (last visited Sep. 3, 2024).

<sup>57</sup> Annual Report Violence 2023, Venezuelan Violence Observatory (OVV), Dec. 28, 2023, pg. 30, available at: <https://observatoriodeviolencia.org.ve/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/OVV-Violence-in-Venezuela-Annual-Report-2023-.pdf> (last visited Sep. 3, 2024); Venezuela Investigative Unit, Why Is Venezuela's Crime Rate Falling?, InSight Crime, May 28, 2024, available at: <https://insightcrime.org/news/venezuela-crime-rate-falling/> (last visited Sep. 3, 2024).

<sup>58</sup> Venezuela Investigative Unit, Why Is Venezuela's Crime Rate Falling?, InSight Crime, May 28, 2024, available at: <https://insightcrime.org/news/venezuela-crime-rate-falling/> (last visited Sep. 3, 2024).

<sup>59</sup> Venezuela Investigative Unit, Why Is Venezuela's Crime Rate Falling?, InSight Crime, May 28, 2024, available at: <https://insightcrime.org/news/venezuela-crime-rate-falling/> (last visited Sep. 3, 2024).

<sup>60</sup> Freedom in the World 2024 – Venezuela, Freedom House, Feb. 29, 2024, available at: <https://freedomhouse.org/country/venezuela/freedom-world/2024> (last visited Sep. 3, 2024).

<sup>61</sup> Venezuela - Country Focus, European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA), Nov. 2023, pg. 42, available at: [https://coi.euaa.europa.eu/administration/caso/PLib/2023\\_11\\_EUAA\\_COI\\_Report\\_Venezuela\\_Country\\_Focus.pdf](https://coi.euaa.europa.eu/administration/caso/PLib/2023_11_EUAA_COI_Report_Venezuela_Country_Focus.pdf) (last visited Sep. 3, 2024).

PRE-DECISIONAL/DELIBERATIVE



## PRE-DECISIONAL/DELIBERATIVE

**Extension of the Venezuela 2023 Temporary Protected Status Designation and Consolidation of Filing Processes**

Page 10

inhuman and degrading treatment, including sexual and gender-based violence, and killings consistent with extrajudicial executions.”<sup>62</sup>

In summary, extraordinary and temporary conditions, including a severe humanitarian emergency marked by an economic contraction, deepening poverty, reduced access to food and medicine, a collapse in basic services, fuel shortages, human rights abuses and political repression, crime and violence, and increased human mobility and displacement, continue to prevent Venezuelan nationals from returning in safety.

**Timeliness:** You are required by statute to decide whether to extend or terminate an existing TPS designation at least 60 days before the expiration of the current designation, or the designation is automatically extended for a minimum of six months.<sup>63</sup> The Venezuela 2023 TPS designation expires on April 2, 2025, and the Secretary of Homeland Security must make a decision by February 1, 2025, or the automatic extension occurs. You are further required to provide timely notice of your decision through publication in the *Federal Register*.<sup>64</sup> Your earliest decision will facilitate publication of the *Federal Register* notice, to provide predictability and clarity to TPS beneficiaries, their employers, and benefit-granting agencies.

---

<sup>62</sup> Venezuela - Country Focus, European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA), Nov. 2023, pg. 26, available at: [https://coi.euaa.europa.eu/administration/caso/PLib/2023\\_11\\_EUAA\\_COI\\_Report\\_Venezuela\\_Country\\_Focus.pdf](https://coi.euaa.europa.eu/administration/caso/PLib/2023_11_EUAA_COI_Report_Venezuela_Country_Focus.pdf) (last visited Sep. 3, 2024).

<sup>63</sup> See INA sec. 244(b)(3)(A), (C).

<sup>64</sup> See INA sec. 244(b)(3)(A).

PRE-DECISIONAL/DELIBERATIVE



## **Extension of Temporary Protected Status for Venezuela**

Page 11

**Recommendation:** Following interagency consultation with DOS and a thorough review of the conditions in Venezuela, USCIS recommends that you extend the 2023 Designation of Venezuela for TPS for 18 months, from April 3, 2025, through October 2, 2026, on the basis of extraordinary and temporary conditions that continue to prevent Venezuelan nationals from returning in safety to Venezuela. USCIS recommends that upon publication of the notice of the Venezuela 2023 TPS extension, both existing designations for Venezuela will be under one streamlined filing process, such that all eligible Venezuela TPS beneficiaries – either under the Venezuela 2021 TPS designation or Venezuela 2023 TPS designation – may re-register under the extension and obtain TPS through the same extension date of October 2, 2026.

### **Attachments:**

Attachment A:	Temporary Protected Status Legal Authority
Attachment B:	USCIS Country Conditions Report on TPS for Venezuela
Attachment C:	DOS Recommendation and Country Conditions Report on TPS for Venezuela